

IUCN WORLD CONGRESS, AMMAN, JORDAN

OCTOBER 5, 2000

INTERACTIVE SESSION 7

Environment and Security: A Strategic Role for IUCN

Session 3: Environmental Stress, Livelihood Insecurity and Conflict

Interlinking Crises: Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province

Asif Ali-Zaidi, IUCN Pakistan

Richard A. Matthew, University of California at Irvine, USA

INTRODUCTION

- " The situation in Pakistan is quite complex and a brief presentation runs the risk of misrepresenting some of this complexity
- " With this caveat in mind, I nonetheless propose to give a brief overview of this case that will try to identify the principal factors at work in this region
- " My presentation has six parts:

- " **BACKGROUND TO THIS CASE STUDY**
- " **OVERVIEW OF PAKISTAN'S NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE**
- " **MODEL OF INTERLINKED CRISES**
- " **HOT SPOTS**
- " **FUTURE SCENARIOS**
- " **CONCLUSIONS**

BACKGROUND TO THIS CASE STUDY

- " In 1999, three people including myself undertook a CIDA-funded study of environment and security linkages in the NWFP
- " The study involved several weeks of travel in the region and over 70 interviews
- " Dr. Asif Ali-Zaidi of IUCN-Pakistan provided support to this study
- " Dr. Zaidi and I were later asked to join the CEEESP Task Force and agreed to collaborate on this case study
- " Unfortunately Dr. Zaidi is not able to be here to join in the presentation

OVERVIEW OF PAKISTAN'S NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

- " 80 million years ago the landmasses of Asia and the Indian sub-continent collided, creating this very mountainous region that serves as a gateway to and from West Asia
- " this rugged topography is in many ways the defining feature of the NWFP, although south of the mountains are the fertile and much fought over Peshawar Valley, and still further south the semi-arid plains that roll into Punjab and Baluchistan
- " approximately 19 m people live here; one-half are Pashtan; another 6 m Pashtan live in Afghanistan
- " the NWFP is bounded by Afghanistan to the West, and the territories of Gilgit, Kashmir and Jammu to the East
- " It is composed of two major political entities, the virtually autonomous Tribal Areas that run along the Afghan border and then 24 districts
- " its strategic location has made it attractive to outsiders who have invaded on numerous occasions (notably the Macedonians, Kushans, Huns, Arabs, Mongols, and, most recently, the British)
- " here are some basic facts about the NWFP

Table 1. Basic Facts

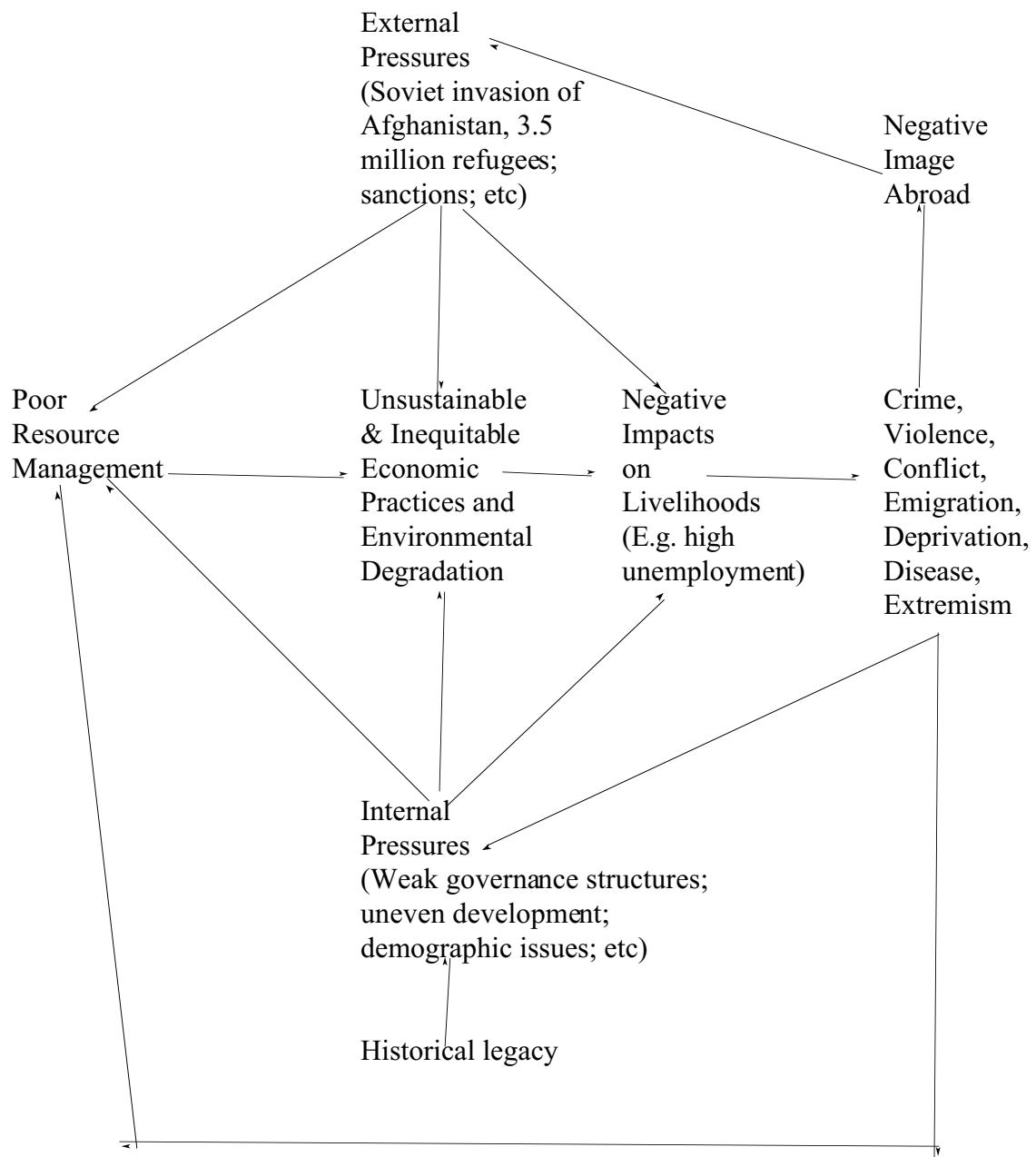
<i>Category</i>	<i>NWFP</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>
Total Area (sq. km.)	74,521	803,940
<i>Population (millions, 1998 est.)</i>	16.5	135.1
Literacy Rate	17%	36.4%
<i>Population Growth (1996 est.)</i>	3.2%	2.8%
Per Capita Income (1996 est.)	\$200 US	\$470 US
<i>Pop. Living in Poverty (1996 est.)</i>	20%	34%
Unemployment (1996 est.)	NA	16%
<i>Refugees (millions, 1999 est.)</i>	1.6	2
Forest Cover	6-23%	5%
<i>Grazing Land</i>	23%	6%
Arable Land	19%	27%

[Sources: *The New York Times Almanac* 1999; *Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy* 1997; *Pakistan in the 21st Century: A Renewed Alliance* 1997; *Environmental Profile of North-West Frontier Province* 1994; *The Cambridge Factfinder* 1993. NB: data are highly inconsistent across various sources.]

MODEL OF INTERLINKED CRISES

- " the NWFP is currently experiencing several interactive and interlinked problems that are so severe that we describe them as crises
- " they can be modeled as follows:

MODEL OF INTERLINKING CRISES IN PAKISTAN'S NWFP



Key issues:

- " demographic: 3.2% growth; 1.5-2 million refugees; inadequate urban structure; young population
- " economic: high debt; sanctions; loss of aid; SAPs; uneven development; \$200 US pci; 17% literacy
- " governance: inefficient; overwhelmed; pervasive corruption
- " external pressures: drug trafficking; refugees; mujahidin; sanctions; intervention
- " environmental: loss of forest cover; soil erosion; air and water pollution; flooding; scarcities of cropland, pasture and wood for energy

HOT SPOTS

- " *Urban Centers.* Approximately 1.3 million people, including some 500,000 Afghan refugees, live in the NWFP's capital city, Peshawar, which is one of the oldest urban centers on the planet. Once known as the "city of flowers," Peshawar's infrastructure has been overwhelmed by a growth rate of 4.6% over the past 20 years. Raw sewage (only 1/3 of it is treated), industrial waste, fertilizers and pesticides are among the pollutants that pour daily into Peshawar's fresh water system. Approximately 40% of all deaths are linked to water quality problems. Air pollution is also severe due to highly toxic vehicle and kiln emissions (brick kilns typically burn car tires), and some 60% of solid waste is not sent to landfills but simply accumulates in alleys and abandoned fields. Since 1979 Peshawar has served as a staging ground for the mujahidin, the hub of the Golden Crescent drug trade, and a bustling center for smuggled goods. High unemployment and growing resentment over the continuing presence of Afghan refugees, who are often accused of taking away jobs and engaging in street crime, add to the general instability.
- " *Agricultural Areas.* Dir is typical of many districts and villages that have relied on old growth forest to provide essential ecological services such as flood control, and commodities like fuel and building materials. Today Dir is a paradigm of those areas of the NWFP in which extensive logging is causing hardship as well as widespread and often violent conflict over property rights (as much as 90% of forest rights are in dispute). Ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms, a sluggish economy and ideological extremism further incite the large, young, and often unemployed citizenry. To the south, the district of Bannu provides a good example of tensions growing around water scarcity and social injustice. Water allocation in Bannu is based on a system of entitlements established by the British in 1905, and on a collapsing irrigation works that is choked with sediment. The end result is that a minority has access to large quantities of water and controls much of the farmland. An increasingly restless majority experiences chronic water shortages. The costs of building more efficient and just water distribution systems have so far been deemed exorbitant, although plans to build a new dam, the Karabagh, are under review. In both Dir and Bannu, population growth and environmental stress, together with social conditions perceived as unfair, corrupt and inflexible, are the ingredients of a potentially violent crisis.
- " *Border Region/Tribal Areas.* The 800 mile border between the NWFP and Afghanistan has historically been a volatile place. Today the legacies of British imperialism and the Afghan-Soviet War continue to haunt this region. The British set up inefficient irrigation systems and large scale timber harvesting that have resulted in salinization, water-logging, soil erosion and flooding. In the wake of the Soviet invasion, millions of landmines on the Afghan side of the border, along with an economy that is in chaos, keep refugees from returning. To survive they cultivate poppy, produce heroin and smuggle a wide range of goods. Meanwhile toxic wastes dumped into the Kabul River take a further toll on the environment. Again, rapid population growth and environmental degradation, in an unstable social context, are creating high levels of human insecurity.

- " *Refugee Camps.* The approximately 200 refugee camps, located throughout the NWFP including all of the areas noted above, must also be considered hot spots. The psychological stresses of living in such dire and inhuman conditions for two decades stresses inflamed by ideological extremism, local resentment and the continuing uncertainty that plagues the future of Afghanistan make these heavily armed camps a source of great concern. As many as 1.6 million individuals continue to live as refugees, many of them born and raised in the camps. With little or no formal education and few livelihood options, they constitute a tremendous challenge to the future stability of the region.
- " *Disputed Territories.* Finally, the NWFP is also vulnerable to behavior outside of its borders, especially in the disputed territories of Kashmir and Jammu. While accurate information is difficult to obtain, there is little doubt that inhabitants of the NWFP have been involved in various ways in the ongoing conflict with India. After the violent skirmishes of 1999, there is little talk of a peaceful resolution to the problem and a powerful desire never to cede the area to India. Clearly if the level conflict were to escalate, it would affect the whole of the NWFP, adding tremendous stress to regions already on the threshold of crisis.

FUTURE SCENARIOS

- " *Impllosion.* As traditional livelihoods and social systems erode, local officials worry that alternatives will not develop rapidly enough to alleviate growing fear and anger. It would not be unprecedented for citizens to rise against authorities or for violence in one part of the province to trigger violence elsewhere leading to a general collapse of the local economy.
- " *Projection.* Conversely one can imagine local fears and anxieties channeled by circumstance or through the activities of angry leaders into violence directed against the Afghan refugees or against India in Kashmir and Jammu. In either case the level of conflict could rapidly spiral into a major catastrophe.
- " *Intervention.* It is also conceivable that a country such as the United States or an organization such as the United Nations Security Council might decide to escalate its level of involvement in combating the drug trade or other criminal activities in the area. Intervention could be direct or, as has already happened on a smaller scale in the case of drug trafficking, Pakistan's national government might be pressured to apply force itself. However, the people of the region are accustomed to armed resistance and could meet any form of intervention with sustained violence.
- " *Adaptation.* Fortunately, violence and conflict are never the only possible outcomes. There are many innovative, committed and forward looking groups in the NWFP, actively working to improve resource management; promote sustainable development; build educational and other infrastructure; establish effective conflict resolution mechanisms; and address such thorny issues as property rights, refugees, illegal livelihoods, and Kashmir. Various groups are already experimenting with reforestation and alternative energy such as mini-hydroelectric plants. They are setting up cooperatives to develop the fruit and nut industry, encourage tourism and empower women. And they are constructing fora for dialogue and cooperation among religious elites, elders, landowners, refugees and government officials. Peaceful change cannot be ruled out as a scenario of the future.

CONCLUSIONS

- " Grounds for optimism:
 - " UNEP, WWF and IUCN produced the World Conservation Strategy (1980)
 - " National Conservation Strategy for Pakistan (1992)
 - " Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (1995)
 - " CIDA-IUCN Study (1999)
 - " the designs for better resource management, protection of living systems and sustainable development are well advanced; the resources are lacking
 - " new government focused on reducing inefficiency and corruption
- " but there is a long way to go and many challenges to be addressed such as:
 - " strained foreign relations
 - " the status and future of the refugees
 - " poor economic performance
 - " inadequate infrastructure
 - " severe pollution especially of air and water
 - " large number of land disputes
 - " drug trafficking
- " this is a beautiful region that is being overwhelmed by an interlocking set of demographic, economic, political and environmental crises; many observers believe the situation is beyond salvaging; I do not, but it is certainly a challenge that will require sustained and concerted effort